Integrative Review of Facility Interventions to Manage Compassion Fatigue in Oncology Nurses

Dorien Wentzel, MPH, and Petra Brysiewicz, PhD

Although oncology nursing can be a worthwhile and gratifying career, the highly stressful incidents oncology nurses experience in caring for patients may affect their psychological well-being (Quinal, Harford, & Rutledge, 2009; Zander, Hutton, & King, 2010). Oncology nurses are likely to experience compassion fatigue by repeated exposure to patients who are undergoing numerous and repeated traumas associated with oncology, such as the aggressive side effects of chemotherapy and severe pain experienced in the end stages of cancer (Kash et al., 2000; Potter et al., 2010). This is further compounded by nurses' lack of technical and theoretical tools to assess patients' physical and emotional responses, making them feel powerless and potentially leading to compassion fatigue (Lupo et al., 2012). Compassion and empathy often attract nurses to oncology, but empathy for patients with cancer may also result in harmful emotional and physical aftereffects in nurses (McSteen, 2010). The psychological trauma experienced by healthcare workers is currently a subject of interest. The definitions of burnout, secondary stress syndrome, secondary stress in traumatology, secondary victimization, secondary traumatic stress, secondary survivor, compassion fatigue, and vicarious...